

abuse among veterans. As veterans returned from Iraq and Afghanistan, Swords worked with vets and their families to identify gaps in VA services and established the Institute for Veteran Policy to make recommendations to the military and VA to better address the needs of our newest veterans.

Today, with the help of more than 100 dedicated staff, Swords provides employment and job training, legal services, and housing assistance to more than 2,000 veterans in the San Francisco Bay area each year.

I want to extend my special thanks to Michael Blecker, a U.S. Army veteran who joined Swords in 1976 and has served as its executive director since 1980. I am lucky to have known Michael for more than two decades, and there is no one who has been more dedicated to ensuring that veterans are treated with the dignity they deserve.

Our service men and women and their families who have made tremendous sacrifices in service to America deserve not only our deepest gratitude but also our commitment to help them lead healthy and productive lives. As Swords to Plowshares celebrates its 40th anniversary, I offer my profound thanks for all it does to fulfill our sacred obligation to our Nation's veterans.●

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND CECIL WILLIAMS

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 85th birthday and extraordinary contributions of my dear friend, the Reverend Cecil Williams.

For more than half a century, Reverend Williams has served as the founder and minister of Liberation at Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco, CA. As a minister, community leader, author, lecturer, and champion of the poor and marginalized, Reverend Williams is widely recognized and revered as a national leader in the struggle for civil rights, human rights, and social change.

Cecil Williams was born in San Angelo, TX, and from a very young age, this caring and sensitive boy was fondly known as "the Rev" by his close-knit family. Cecil grew up in the segregated South, but his strong, loving mother always told her son, "You are going to be somebody."

After graduating from Huston-Tillotson University and the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Cecil Williams became the pastor of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church at a time when its congregation was dwindling. Reverend Williams embarked on his life's work: to make this church the center of a vibrant community that would reach out to all, particularly the poor, oppressed, and marginalized.

Reverend Williams welcomed worshippers of all backgrounds, races, and sexual orientations. In 1964, he helped establish the Council on Religion and

Homosexuality an organization dedicated to educating religious communities about gay and lesbian issues and stood up to police who attempted to shut down a dance benefit to raise funds for the new organization. Reverend Williams was also one of the first clergymen to take a stand for same-sex couples by presiding over their weddings four decades before today's struggle to legalize gay marriage.

Under his leadership, Glide Memorial thrived and became a cornerstone of the community. He hosted poets, jazz musicians, and political activists at the church and launched a free meals program that serves 750,000 meals a year, feeding more than 3,500 hungry people daily. Today more than 17,000 people participate in Glide programs, volunteering in its community clinic, childcare, and afterschool programs, housing services, and Daily Free Meals program.

Reverend Williams is married to Janice Mirikitani, Founding President of the Glide Foundation, and together they direct Glide's many innovative social and cultural programs.

In his life and work, Rev. Cecil Williams has embodied Glide Memorial's revolutionary mission: "to create a radically inclusive, just and loving community mobilized to alleviate suffering and break the cycles of poverty and marginalization."

I am proud to join his family, friends, and many admirers in celebrating the 85th birthday and extraordinary contributions of Rev. Cecil Williams.●

TRIBUTE TO JOHN HOGANSON

● Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I wish to honor John Hoganson who retired at the end of July after 33 years of dedicated service to the State of North Dakota with the North Dakota Geologic Survey.

John traces his love for discovery and earth science back to his childhood in eastern North Dakota. As a child, John could be found with his father's claw hammer breaking open rocks in an attempt to discover the mysteries that lay inside. As a young adult, his passion and curiosity helped him graduate from North Dakota State University and eventually to earn a doctorate in geology with an emphasis in paleontology from the University of North Dakota.

He began his career in public service as a geologist with the Geologic Survey. The position later transitioned when he was tasked with formulating a fossil resource management plan for the State. John would later go on to serve as our State's first paleontologist, a position he held for 25 years.

John was instrumental in securing passage of two landmark pieces of legislation in the North Dakota State legislature that helped to protect our State's fossil resources and created a state fossil collection. Under John's leadership, North Dakota's fossil collection has grown from a small collec-

tion of bones to one that now numbers in the hundreds of thousands. One of the top finds includes a 67-million-year-old *Edmontosaurus*, a duck-billed dinosaur, with intact fossilized skin, who has been affectionately named Dakota. Dakota is one of only a handful of dinosaurs in existence to have preserved skin. Dakota has been regarded by experts as one of the more important discoveries in recent times because he may be the best-preserved *Edmontosaurus* found to date. He also created a public dig program which has brought in volunteers from across the country and around the world to assist with digs.

In addition to his work for the State, John has also been a valuable teacher and mentor, spending countless hours engaging students of all ages and the general public around the State in hands-on educational experiences. Without John's passion and commitment, many North Dakotans would have never been aware of our State's rich paleontological history. He has been pivotal in the creation of curriculum for the North Dakota Studies project, and the 24 fossil exhibits in museums and visitors centers across the State.

In evidence to his lifelong commitment to discovery, John will be continuing his work with fossils by completing some research projects and writing papers for scientific journals. I want to thank John for his years of dedication and service as an advocate for paleontology and as a teacher to the people of North Dakota. I wish him the best in his new endeavors and a happy and full retirement.●

CONGRATULATING DAVID SOUSA

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate David Sousa on his being elected the Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW, Nevada Department Commander for 2015. I am proud to honor a Nevadan who has dedicated his life to serving our country and is committed to ensuring that our Nation's heroes receive the care that they deserve.

Commander Sousa has had a long and decorated military career in the United States Army for over 25 years. During his service, he has served missions in Kenya and Somalia and went on to serve in "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, as a member of the 72nd Military Police Company. He also went on to serve in "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Kandahar, Afghanistan, as a member of the 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion. I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Commander Sousa for his courageous contributions to the United States of America and to freedom-loving nations around the world. His service to his country and his bravery and dedication earn him a place among the outstanding men and women who have valiantly defended our Nation.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I recognize

the important role the Veterans of Foreign Wars plays for combat veterans and military servicemembers from the active, Guard, and Reserve forces. This distinguished national group of veterans has been a constant influence, furthering the voice of all of our Nation's heroes. On July 22, 2014, at the 115th National Convention, David Sousa was elected Nevada Department Commander. Commander Sousa has served and held many roles within the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization for the past 10 years and has previously been named the VFW Outstanding Veteran for 2006. His work for the VFW is exemplary, and I expect great things from him as he assumes his role as Nevada's Department Commander.

Commander Sousa's focus of his work for this year is suicide prevention and awareness for veterans, as well as working towards a safer community for veterans. I commend Commander Sousa on this important goal and look forward to working with him to achieve this. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I recognize that Congress has a responsibility not only to honor these brave individuals who serve our Nation but also to ensure they are cared for when they return home. I am concerned about the needs of Nevada's veterans, especially those suffering one of the most common injuries from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars—post-traumatic stress. I believe Congress has a responsibility to enact policies that will help veterans overcome these difficulties and ensure that the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs have the resources necessary to meet the growing needs of Nevada and our Nation's veteran communities. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation.

I am both humbled and honored by Commander Sousa's service and am proud to call him a fellow Nevadan. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Commander Sousa for all of his accomplishments and wish him well in all of his future endeavors.●

RECOGNIZING WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S AIR NATIONAL GUARD

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate the Washoe County School District's Air National Guard for receiving the Secretary of Defense Freedom Award.

Former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, developed the Secretary of Defense Freedom Award under the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve office in 1996. Each year, up to 15 awards are presented to employers in three categories: large business, small business, and the public sector. The award honors employers who have shown exceptional support to their Guard and Reserve employees and have gone above and beyond what is feder-

ally mandated to ensure that their military employees are well taken care of. This esteemed award is the highest in a series of Department of Defense employer awards, and I congratulate Washoe County School District's Air National Guard on being selected as one of only 190 employers to receive this award.

Washoe County School District's Air National Guard's extraordinary level of support they provide to their servicemembers is admirable, and I am both humbled and honored to acknowledge Washoe County School District's Air National Guard here today. During deployment, the school district takes the time to send emails and care packages to our brave men and women. Its support services also extend to the members' families. Washoe County teachers volunteer their own time to help children and spouses who are in need of assistance by babysitting, housecleaning, and running errands. The school district has also been commended for the support it showed after a fellow Guardsman and teacher, Michael Landsberry, was killed defending students during a shooting at Sparks Middle School last year.

Each and every day, our troops are serving the United States to protect the freedoms we enjoy today. They dedicate their lives to serve this great Nation and constantly make grave sacrifices to ensure the safety of our country. Our servicemembers and their families deserve our gratitude and thanks, and as a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am committed to keeping our Nation's promise to care for them. There is no way to adequately thank the men and women that lay down their lives for our freedoms, but Washoe County School District's Air National Guard has shown an unwavering dedication and commitment to ensuring that our servicemembers and their families are getting the support that they deserve.

I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in congratulating Washoe County School District's Air National Guard and know that they serve as an example for the rest of the Silver State.●

RECOGNIZING VETERAN'S VILLAGE

● Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Veteran's Village in Las Vegas, NV, for its commitment and dedication to providing our veterans with transitional and permanent housing. Veteran's Village is the only 24-hour, 7-day-a-week social service facility for veterans in Las Vegas.

The brave men and women who served the United States and fought to protect our freedom have often come home to a struggling economy. A number of veterans are unable to find a job or afford to buy or rent a home. As the demographics of our Armed Forces have changed throughout the years, so too have the needs of homeless vet-

erans. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, this is an issue I have been personally involved with and have introduced legislation to address. Organizations like the Veteran's Village serve to help those in need in an environment of respect and dignity within the Las Vegas community. This organization is a shining example of the kind of initiatives that will help get our veterans back on their feet.

There is no way to adequately thank the men and women that lay down their lives for our freedoms, but the Founders and volunteers at the Veteran's Village are working to assist our Nation's veterans by giving them shelter while they try to rebuild their lives. The organization was founded by Dr. Arnold Stalk, who envisioned turning the old Econo Lodge into a facility to house our homeless veterans. With the help of public and private collaborative partnerships, Veteran's Village has created a home environment for our Nation's heroes who need a helping hand. This organization's continued dedication to serving veterans through providing skills training, nutrition, employment training and referrals, continuing education and degree programs, medical services, mental health counseling and much more is commendable, and I am proud to honor this organization here today.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I know the struggles that our veterans face after returning home from the battlefield. Congress has a responsibility not only to honor these brave individuals, but to ensure they receive the quality care they have earned and deserve. I remain committed to upholding this promise for our veterans and servicemembers in Nevada and throughout the Nation. I am very pleased that veterans' service organizations like the Veteran's Village are committed to ensuring that the needs of our veterans are being met.

Today, I ask my colleagues and all Nevadans to join me in recognizing the Veteran's Village, an organization whose mission is both noble and charitable. I am both humbled and honored to acknowledge the Veteran's Village and its work to end homelessness for veterans throughout the United States, and I wish it the best of luck in all of its future endeavors.●

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAURIUM MANOR INN

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the 25th anniversary of the Laurium Manor Inn in Houghton County, MI, which was celebrated on September 14, 2014. I extend my heartiest congratulations to Dave and Julie Sprenger, who purchased a vacant historic mansion 25 years ago with the intention of opening a bed and breakfast. The Sprenger's vision resulted in a small business success building on the rich history of